

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
INR-10 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03
SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 AGRE-00 PA-01 NSC-05
SS-15 STR-07 CEA-01 /087 W
-----002104 070752Z /20

R 070709Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4086
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LENINGRAD 00721

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ECON, UR
SUBJ: LITHUANIAN FOOD SITUATION

REF: 77 LENINGRAD A-43

1. SUMMARY: RECENT VISIT TO VILNIUS CENTRAL FARM MARKET REVEALED SPARSE FOOD SUPPLY FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE AT THE MOMENT. LITHUANIAN FONMINREP ACKNOWLEDGED RECENT MEAT SHORTAGES BUT TREATED THEM AS PAST PHENOMENON. OTHER SOURCES, HOWEVER, CONTINUE REPORT CONTINUED SHORTAGES OF VEGETABLES AND OF SOME OF LITHUANIAN MEAT SPECIALITIES ALTHOUGH RYE BREAD IS BACK ON THE SHELVES. AS IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD, SPECIFICS OF RECENT PRICE INCREASES WERE ALSO KNOWN IN VILNIUS AT LEAST DAY AHEAD OF ANNOUNCEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. VISIT BY CONGENOFFS TO VILNIUS' CENTRAL COLLECTIVE FARM MARKET MARCH 2 REVEALED THAT SUPPLIES FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE ARE IN SPARSE SUPPLY AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR.

(A) MEAT SUPPLY WAS THIN AND LIMITED. A POOR SELECTION OF RATHER BONEY BEEF WAS AVAILABLE AT R1.90 BUT THERE WAS NO PORK OR VEAL TO BE SEEN AT ALL.

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FATBACK WAS AVAILABLE AT R3.20 AND CHICKENS AT R3.50. BEYOND THAT MEAT SELECTION WAS LIMITED TO BRAIN (R1.30), LIVER (R.80), AND PIGS FEET (.25). A FAIRLY BROAD RANGE OF SOFT SAUSAGE WAS AVAILABLE IN GOOD AMOUNTS AT R2.20-2.80 BUT NONE OF PREFERRED HARD SAUSAGE WAS SEEN. (B) MARKET WAS EXTREMELY POOR IN VEGETABLES. VIRTUALLY ALL TO BE HAD WAS CABBAGE (R1.00), APPLES (R1-2.50),

NUTS, AND DRIED MUSHROOMS. LATTER, A LITHUANIAN SPECIALTY, COST BETWEEN R18 AND R38 A STRING. EGGS WERE GOING FOR R1.40 PER 10. UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, ALL ABOVE PRICES PER KILO.

3. ASKED ABOUT RECENT MEAT SHORTAGES, FONMINREP ZORGEVICIUS ACKNOWLEDGED SHORTAGES, AND FACT THEY WERE PERHAPS DUE TO EXCESSIVE EXPORTS OUTSIDE LITHUANIA, BUT TREATED THEM AS PROBLEM OF THE PAST.

4. U.S. STUDENT CONTACT OF LITHUANIAN DESCENT DESCRIBED THE OVERALL FOOD SITUATION IN VILNIUS AS FOLLOWS: THERE NOW IS SUFFICIENT BEEF BUT FAVORED PORK TENDS TO BE IN SHORT SUPPLY AND QUITE FATTY IN CONTENT. SOURCES CONFIRMED THAT LITHUANIAN HARD SAUSAGES ARE NOT TO BE FOUND, ALTHOUGH OTHER TYPES OF SAUSAGE ARE AVAILABLE. HIGHLY FAVORED LITHUANIAN SMOKED HAM SPECIALTY (SKILANDIS) IS SIMPLY NOT TO BE HAD AND RUMORS ARE THAT ENTIRE PRODUCTION IS EXPORTED TO "INTERIOR" (I.E. RUSSIAN PROVINCES.) PREVIOUSLY REPORTED RYE BREAD SHORTAGE (REFAIR) CONTINUED FROM BEGINNING OF NOVEMBER 1977 UNTIL END OF JANUARY 1978 BUT SHORTAGE HAS NOW EASED AND RYE BREAD IS GENERALLY AVAILABLE. THERE IS A SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF TOMATOES, CUCUMBERS AND ANY KIND OF SALADS. SOURCE ADDED THAT FLOWERS ARE MUCH IN DEMAND FOR LITHUANIAN SOCIAL OCCASIONS AND BRING IN A LARGER PROFIT THAN VEGETABLES. FLOWERS FETCH R3.00 PER BLOOM
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AND THE TRADITIONAL NEW YEARS CARNATIONS THIS YEAR COST R4.50 EACH. AS RESULT, LITHUANIAN FARMERS TEND TO BRING FLOWERS RATHER THAN OTHER TYPES OF FARM PRODUCE TO CENTRAL MARKETS. APPLES ARE IN GOOD SUPPLY AND MOST LITHUANIANS HAVE READY ACCESS TO PEAR AND OTHER HOMEMADE COMPOTES. SOURCE ADDED THAT LITHUANIANS ARE INVETERATE CANNERS AND MOST FAMILIES ALSO HAVE GOOD SUPPLIES OF JAMS AND PRESERVES TO TIDE THEM THROUGH WINTER MONTHS. SUPPLIES OF VEGETABLES ARE OBTAINED FROM SUMMER PLOTS AND ARE SEEN AS "SIDE REWARD" FOR REQUIRED FIELD LABOR PERFORMED BY STUDENTS AND PERSONNEL FROM OTHER SECTORS OF ECONOMY. IN GENERAL FOOD SHORTAGE EASED BY FACT THAT MOST LITHUANIANS STILL HAVE READY ACCESS TO THESE SOURCES OR DIRECTLY TO THE COUNTRYSIDE EITHER THROUGH FAMILY OR FRIENDS, RESULTING IN STEADY FLOW OF FOOD INTO CITY THROUGH INFORMAL CHANNELS.

5. SPECIFICS OF RECENT PRICE INCREASES IN COFFEE, GASOLINE, SILVER, GOLD AND OTHER ITEMS SEEMED TO BE COMMON KNOWLEDGE ON THE LITHUANIAN GRAPEVINE AT LEAST A DAY AHEAD OF THEIR ANNOUNCEMENT. WE WERE GIVEN ACCURATE INFORMATION ON THESE DAY IN

ADVANCE. WE HAD NO CHANCE TO SAMPLE PROBABLE REACTION IN ANY DEPTH. INITIAL REACTION OF FEW SOURCES WE ASKED, HOWEVER, WAS THAT THERE UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE RESENTMENT AMONG LITHUANIAN POPULATION AT INCREASES; BUT MOST LIKELY REACTION PROBABLY WOULD BE REDUCTION IN DEMAND, RATHER THAN STRIKES OR OTHER OPEN MANIFESTATIONS OF DISCONTENT IN TIGHTLY CONTROLLED LITHUANIAN SITUATION. ONE SOURCE (LITHUANIAN DRIVER) SAID THAT THE GASOLINE PRICE INCREASE WAS LIKELY TO RESULT IN A RETURN OF PORTION OF CAR-OWNING POPULATION TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION DURING THE WORK WEEK. HE DOUBTED, HOWEVER,

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THAT CAR-OWNING LITHUANIANS YET READY TO SACRIFICE THEIR BELOVED WEEKEND USE FOR ACCESS TO COUNTRYSIDE.

6. COMMENT: IN GENERAL, WE WERE IMPRESSED BY THE RELATIVELY HIGH QUALITY AND STYLE OF THE VILNIUS POPULATIONS' DRESS IN COMPARISON WITH THAT OF LENINGRAD. DESPITE THE PUBLIC SHORTAGES, WE FOUND THAT PRINCIPAL RESTAURANTS IN THE TOWN, ALL OF WHICH REQUIRE RESERVATIONS, HAVE NUMBER OF LITHUANIAN PORK SPECIALTIES ON MENU. AT LEAST ONE, HOWEVER, WAS OUT OF COFFEE.
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